

Rep. Louise M. Slaughter, Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today issued the following statement in response to news that President Obama had created a task force to work with the European Community on antimicrobial resistance. The White House announcement signals a greater understanding of the dangers posed by antimicrobial resistance, which is at the core of Slaughter's legislation to limit the indiscriminate use of antibiotics in livestock.

"It's good to see recognition from the Administration and the European Community that the rapid expansion of bacteria resistant to our best antibiotics is a serious public health threat," Slaughter said. "I have asked President Obama to consider taking administrative action to limit the use of antibiotics in farm animals to help slow the growth of this trend. In the meantime, it's my strong hope that a high level task force addressing this issue is the best way to raise awareness and stop the problem from getting even worse."

Slaughter is a leader on food safety issues and introduced the Preservation of Antibiotics of Medical Treatment Act on March 17, 2009. She is the only microbiologist in Congress.

The language of the White House announcement is below:

"The EU and WHO names the rapid development of antimicrobial resistance as one of the three greatest threats to human health. Without access to effective antibiotics, infections that today are considered harmless could again become serious health problems and a major cause of death. A strong and clear political position is a prerequisite for international cooperation on measures. Together, the EU and the USA have the best research and development potential to address the issue effectively.

At the summit it was decided to appoint a working group on antimicrobial resistance. The working group will begin by identifying and agreeing on important issues related to antimicrobial resistance. A concrete action plan is to be drawn up and it is suggested that the working group should report back at the 2011 summit."